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642 taken in its composition. No government was ever set up that more closely deserved to be called a coalition. There were representatives of all parties at each level of the administration. Of the thirteen main posts, four went to Social Democrats, four to the Austrian People's Party, three to Communists, and two to non-party men. In addition, in all Ministries, except the Ministry of Finance, two Under-Secretaries were appointed from the parties to which the Minister did not [645] belong. Dr. Renner himself, as Chancellor, was assisted by three Secretaries without portfolio, who with him constituted the Political Cabinet Council. This body, in addition to acting as an inner Cabinet, temporarily formed the supreme executive authority and carried out the duties previously performed by the President of the Republic. Its members, apart from the Chancellor, were Leopold Figl, Adolf Schärf, and Johann Koplenig.

The whole Government, including the Under-Secretaries, formed the Cabinet in the broader sense. From the point of view of taking executive decisions, this body was inconveniently large. But, on the whole, its size was an advantage. As there was no Parliament, it was executive and legislature rolled into one, and had to perform the functions of a Cabinet and of both parliamentary Chambers. It was therefore a good thing that it should be as representative as possible. Confidence in it as a legislative body was further increased by the principle of unanimity that governed its decisions.

643 In view of the severity of the party conflict in Austria be-
663 tween the Wars, it may well cause surprise that the three parties should have collaborated so closely and successfully during the seven months' life of the Provisional Government. It was due partly to the personality of Dr. Renner. By sheer force of character and political experience he exercised considerable influence over his colleagues in the Government. He was one of the few Austrian statesmen since 1918 who were able to combine lifelong adherence to a political creed with magnanimity and the ability to look beyond party to the needs of the country as a whole. In 1922 he wrote, 'Passion is

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a bad political counsellor', and during the remainder of his life he acted in accordance with this precept. In a speech delivered a few days before his death he spoke of the usefulness of political differences, but emphasized that from the clash of opinions the right course should emerge and common action follow: party, the part, must not usurp the role of the general welfare, which is the whole.

Common suffering at the hands of the Nazis made a great difference also. Political rivals came out of prison as close personal friends addressing one another by the familiar '*du*'. As Leopold Figl said, in the concentration camp a man did not ask his fellow-prisoner what party he belonged to, but whether he was an Austrian. Brave men endured hardship and torture in order not to betray other members of the Resistance, even if they did belong to another party. Adolf Schärf has described how by chance Felix Hurdes, once in a neighbouring cell to his own, was cross-examined about their contacts with each other. However strong party rivalry might subsequently become, such incidents as these could never be forgotten by those who had experienced them.

Another individual who contributed greatly to the success of the Provisional Government by his action and his example was Leopold Figl. In 1945 he was only forty-three, and he had none of Dr. Renner's experience of Parliament and national politics. But he had great integrity and boundless energy. As a member of the Political Cabinet Council, President of the *Bauernbund*, and Governor of Lower Austria, he was rapidly becoming the most significant figure in the People's Party. His loyal and consistent collaboration with Dr. Renner was therefore of great importance. It meant that the leaders of the two main parties, whose rivalry had been so disastrous in the past, were now working together for the good of Austria.

Besides the strong central government that Dr. Renner and his colleagues provided, the country needed a new administration. After the *Anschluss*, Vienna's functions as the administrative centre of Austria were transferred to Berlin. The city ceased to be a capital and became a province and, so far as the

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631 federal civil service was concerned, was left with neither offices nor officials. After 1918 Vienna had been compared to a heart from which the arteries had been severed: after 1945 Dr. Renner described it with good reason as no longer a breathing heart but a mere bundle of torn blood-vessels. Most of the local and provincial government offices survived, but had been largely filled with Nazis, many of German origin. They had either fled before the Allied armies, often burning the records before they left, or were suspended by the Allies after their arrival. The whole administrative machinery of the State, therefore, from the smallest village to the Supreme Court, had to be created anew.

• 163 The work of reconstruction was carried out in a spirit of devotion and enthusiasm under the supervision of Sektionschef Heiterer-Schaller, who was commissioned by Dr. Renner to re-organize the administration. In the early weeks it was largely a matter of improvisation and individual initiative. Personnel had to be re-assembled, premises found, and the most rudimentary equipment collected, like paper and typewriters. While the fighting was still going on, a few civil servants collected at the Chancellery in the Ballhausplatz and began clearing away the rubbish with their own hands. Then very gradually the work became more systematic. When the occupying Powers appointed committees to investigate the situation in September, it was found that a fairly adequate civil service was being built up, recruited mainly from those who had suffered under the Nazi régime and who had had previous administrative experience before the *Anschluss*.

The circumstances in which the task was undertaken could hardly have been worse. Apart from the famine and destruction, and the breakdown of all public services, the condition of the State finances was such that all officials, from the Chancellor to the office charwoman, received a salary of only 150 marks a month until the autumn of 1945. This would not have been enough to pay for the bare necessities of life, had they been available. Yet the spirit in which the task was carried out was excellent. It was a real labour of love performed from a sense

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of deep patriotism. In spite of the sordid conditions and immense difficulties, an atmosphere of happy adventure and exhilaration surrounded the whole operation. As one official who took part in it remarked: 'After all, it is not often that one has an opportunity to build up a State.'

In the work of political and economic reconstruction the Provisional Government received the support and assistance of the Russian military authorities. As will be seen, the Russians at this time were beginning to carry out the systematic confiscation of economic assets which was part of their post-War policy. But this was accompanied by a positive and helpful attitude towards the Government itself. It would be quite wrong to attribute to the Russians at this period the political obstruction they practised later. Buildings were made available for Government departments. There was no interference with the Cabinet's deliberations, and the laws were, with very few exceptions, given tacit approval. In fact, the Provisional Government felt free and unrestricted in the immense legislative task with which it was faced. After all, the Government was a Russian creation, and the Russians must be given credit for the selection of Renner. The fact that he turned out to be a better choice from the Austrian than from the Russian point of view is beside the point.

The Austrian Communists also, in their own way, furthered the work of the Provisional Government. In view of the key positions they held, this was really to be expected. With Russian support they had obtained much fuller representation in the Cabinet than their strength in the country warranted. In addition to providing Under-Secretaries and a member of the Political Cabinet Council, they held the all-important Ministries of the Interior and Education, which were responsible respectively for security and 'public enlightenment'. But the Communists also contributed to the success of the Government for another curious and surprising reason.

Very soon after the arrival of the Russians the chosen leaders of the Austrian Communist Party flew into Vienna in Russian aeroplanes: Ernst Fischer and Johann Koplenig from Moscow,

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642 German Government since the *Anschluss*. They could not be repealed *en masse* without causing great confusion. A further constitutional law was therefore passed, that was also to be effective from the 1st of May, stating that all laws and decrees incompatible with a free and independent Austrian State and with a genuine democracy were annulled. The Government would, after investigation, give notice of those that were invalid. The remainder would for the time being have the force of Austrian law.

With these constitutional acts as a basis, the Provisional Government proceeded with astonishing speed to issue the wide range of laws and decrees necessary for the reconstruction of the Austrian State. When the Government was recognized by the four occupying Powers on the 20th October, over 200 had been promulgated.

643 This remarkable legislative achievement was due very largely to the energy, ingenuity, and legal capacity of Dr. Renner himself. The unanimity rule made the legislative process more difficult. But the Chancellor declared on a number of occasions that he would assume a resolution had been approved, unless its opponents within the Cabinet were prepared to back their opinions by resignation. Being accustomed to night-work himself, Dr. Renner would often call Cabinet meetings for nine o'clock in the evening. The less controversial measures would be taken first, and by about midnight, when most members were suffering from hunger and exhaustion, the more difficult matters would come up for discussion. In those days lack of food was a serious consideration in the lives of all Viennese, and it was customary for wine and sandwiches to be served at the end of Cabinet meetings. Critical faculties were damped, therefore, and the democratic process was considerably eased by Dr. Renner's arrangement. The Chancellor would then sit up far into the night drafting the legislation based on the Cabinet's decisions.

• 663 The administrative tasks that confronted the Provisional Government were endless. It would take many months before anything like normal civic life could be restored.

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Nevertheless a great deal was accomplished at every level; by the Central Government itself, by the provinces, and by the municipalities. And it was not long before the results of their efforts could be seen. Following the example of Vienna, in some cases at the same time, the machinery of local government was set in motion in the villages and towns by the joint action of all parties. This work was carried out with the support of the Russian military authorities, who, however, did not attempt to exercise any undue influence. That this attitude should be taken by an occupying Power, in some cases while fighting was still in progress, is something for which the Russians deserve full credit. In Vienna, before the end of April, several tram services were again working, and gas and electricity were available in some parts of the city. At the beginning of May the first trains left Vienna for Klosterneuburg and Wiener Neustadt, and a restricted mail service was started again. At the end of the month the lighting of private houses was possible for short periods daily, and this was followed early in June by the restoration of street-lighting and a considerable relaxation of the curfew regulations that had been introduced in April. A very limited radio service had been opened in April, and on the 12th of June *Neues Österreich* announced proudly that for the first time for seven years the voice of Austria could be heard again by wireless in the outside world.

The two most serious matters to be settled were the problems of food and security.

The famine conditions in liberated Vienna could not easily be overcome. The city's supply problem since 1918 had always been a difficulty, and the situation in the spring of 1945 made it infinitely worse. The breakdown of communications, the vast number of refugees, and the inevitability of the Russian troops living partly off the country, when they first arrived, led in May to the reduction of the ration to 350 calories a day. The Austrians made every effort to improve the situation, though with little success. Figl's improvised collection service has already been described.[1] But the previous year's stocks were almost exhausted, and the prospects for the new harvest could

[1] [Ct. cat. 116, p. 20 — Analyst]